

HELEN BUMPUS GALLERY

Art, books

share new Duxbury space

More elbow room
for gallery, library
at converted school

By Judith Montminy
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

DUXBURY — Seven years after the Helen Bumpus Gallery faced eviction from the Duxbury Free Library and bad feelings festered between supporters of the two cultural institutions, the hatchet is being buried.

The gallery and library have relocated to expanded space in a converted elementary school, relegating the space competition to history.

"It's a new time," said library director Joanne Lamothe, referring to the good feelings that now exist between the library and the gallery.

The excitement of the newness overflowed the new gallery space last month as enthusiastic volunteers hung the gallery's first exhibit in its new home — oil paintings and drawings by Newton artist Harriet Fishman — filling the walls of the wide L-shaped hallway between two reading areas.

When Bumpus Gallery president Katherine Smit came on board three years ago, overcrowding of the library had already forced the gallery's separate room to be converted into a reference

room. Exhibitions were limited to small works of art on the walls of the reference room and in an oval passageway. The gallery trustees had considered joining forces with the South Shore Conservatory and the Duxbury Art Association at the Ellison Center for the Arts, but eventually pulled out of that collaboration and decided to remain in the library, despite the reduced space.

When the town decided to convert the Alden Elementary School into a library, the gallery's fate still was unclear.

"There had been somewhat of a war as to what was going to happen to the Bumpus Gallery when the library was vacating," Smit said. "There were still a lot of hard feelings. We were fearful when we saw the original plans. . . . When we looked at the plans knowing we were going to stay with the library . . . it looked much smaller than I see now."

Smit, an artist who has lived in Duxbury for 21 years, was determined to put the old ill will to rest and started working with the library's building committee.

She got support from her 12-member
GALLERY, Page 12

Gallery, library share good will, space again

■ GALLERY

Continued from Page 10

board of trustees, most of them local artists who will exhibit in the gallery next summer, and took on the duties of gallery director almost two years ago. Formerly a paid position, the gallery director is now a volunteer job.

"Compromises had to be made along the way, but usually they resolve themselves very well because of the [gallery board of trustees] being so affable," she said.

"We realized we all wanted to stay at the library because it's public and it just seems so wonderful for the kids," said Smit, who also teaches art for the Duxbury Art Association. "It seemed like the right home, so we decided to take what we could get."

The gallery contributed \$10,000 to the new library building fund, hoping to ensure its exhibition space in the facility, although no contract between the two groups has been signed. Continued financial support for the gallery also comes from Nancy Buck, daughter of Helen Bumpus, Smit said.

Since 1968, when the late Helen Bumpus donated \$15,000 in Weyerhaeuser Co. stock to help finance remodeling of the library and create an exhibition space, the gallery has had an unusual relationship with the library.

A gallery committee had been appointed by the library board of trustees, and for a decade, the gallery depended on the library for operating funds, including the salary of the gallery director, the late Gay Youse, a well-connected artist.

In 1980, the gallery lost its library funding but was allowed to stay in the library rent-free - an arrangement it enjoys in the new li-



A painting of a sleeping man by Harriet Fishman at Helen Bumpus Gallery.

brary as well. It also incorporated as a nonprofit educational organization with its own board of trustees.

Over the years, the gallery grew into a position of respect in the New England art world, showing the works of regional artists including sculptors David Aronson, Lloyd Lillie, and John Wilson and painters Harold Tovish, Arthur Polonsky, and Karl Zerbe.

"I had been going to exhibitions there," to see the work of the senior

faculty at Boston University and other well-respected Boston-based artists, said Fishman, the gallery's current artist. "I know there is a longstanding tradition in Duxbury to exhibit artists and support the arts."

When she visited the old gallery last year to see an exhibit of fellow Art Institute of Boston faculty member John Lanza, Fishman was struck by how much the gallery had changed from its former glory.

"It had been reduced," she said.

FYI

The first exhibit at the Helen Bumpus Gallery in the new Duxbury Free Library, 77 Alden St., features oil paintings and drawings by Newton artist Harriet Fishman. Future exhibits include works of Brookline printmaker Dorinda Burrows, Bridgewater painter Mary LoPiccolo, and 11 members of the gallery's board of trustees. The library is wheelchair accessible. Gallery hours: Monday through Thursday 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Friday and Saturday 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Sunday 1-5 p.m. Call 781-934-2721.

"It felt like the whole thing had changed a lot."

Fishman was invited to submit slides for consideration and was honored when the gallery's trustees asked her to be the first to exhibit in the Bumpus Gallery at the new library.

"The fact that the [gallery] space is an improvement over the other space, even though the other library was kind of grand, is beautiful in its own way," Fishman said. "It's a real gallery space, which I find rather nice to have in a library."

"When I went to hang the show there were three women very eager to help me," she said. "Through it all, they persevered. And that says to me they feel strongly about keeping this tradition alive."



GLOBE PHOTO/KERRY BRETT

Newton artist Harriet Fishman stands with some of her works, which are featured in the first exhibit at the new site of the Bumpus Gallery in Duxbury.